

REMARKS

Claims 16-36 are pending. Claims 16-25 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hatakoshi (U.S. Patent No. 6,031,858). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The filing date of the Hatakoshi reference is September 9, 1997. The foreign priority date claimed in this application is March 7, 1997, which is before the filing date of Hatakoshi. Applicant respectfully submits the attached verified English translation of the Japanese priority application 9-52596 filed March 7, 1997 and requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

In the event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952, Ref. 204552016410.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Verified English translation of JP 9-52596 filed March 7, 1997